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Rogue Valley Community Press

Southern Oregon Social Justice News and Action

DECEMBER 2015

Affordable housing crisis impacts most vulnerable

BY VANESSA HOUK

It might be true that the fastest path out of homelessness is to find yourself diagnosed with stage IV cancer, as my friend Greg's recent experience is teaching us. Greg is a lot like many people I've known who are homeless; he'd been stuck there for years. He picked up odd jobs here and there whenever he could, but nothing that ever amounted to enough to get back on his feet. The jobs that he could get often paid less than minimum wage and involved physical labor. Right around the time Greg was diagnosed, the weather turned and temperatures were dropping below freezing. The Ashland Community Resource Center jumped in and helped him secure housing for the next six months.

Before you start to feel comfortable, you should hear that homeless folks don't have the market on housing woes. In 2013, the

rental vacancy rate in Ashland was almost 17%. The rental vacancy rate for all of Jackson County is at an alarming 1.5%. Jackson County is facing a housing crisis.

Charu Colorado, an Ashland based artist, was recently given a 30 day notice that her rent will increase by nearly 50%. Colorado has lived in the same apartment for 23 years. Late last summer, the complex was purchased by Pacific Properties, a property management company. At first Colorado thought she could reason with the property management company. "I thought, they can't do that. I went about having my family help me make investigations and did you know that the state of Oregon has not got a law to protect renters," Colorado says. "They can raise the rent the next day if they want, but they usually wait a month. A month is nothing." Such a dramatic rent increase is hopeless for Colorado who is in her 90's and lives on a modest, fixed income.

Colorado lacks the mobility to simply move out. This is her home. She's created a garden there, grown flowers and vegetables in the soil outside her front door and made improvements on the property. The previous management company valued Colorado's long term residency there. She's been a good tenant. For twenty three years, other than basic maintenance issues, they never needed to replace carpeting or paint

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and all your letters, actions and events...



Local residents sleep out to raise money for homeless outreach

Reflections from sleeping outside

BY HEIDI PARKER

I started getting cold around 4:30-5:00 pm. Some hot soup helped take the chill off, but it was getting dark, and the clouds in the sky were clearing, revealing a few stars.

A small band of fellow community volunteers milled about, most setting up little tents or tarps and spreading out warm sleeping bags in preparation for the long night ahead. Since we weren't allowed to make a campfire on the school playing field, (one of the conditions for our use of the space) and with the bare, un-inviting, portable toilets poised precariously on the hillside a ways away, the campers huddled and chatted quietly amongst themselves, while the high school Leadership Team, plugged into their sound devices, rocked gently to an inaudible beat.

As it grew colder, different opinions on how best to get the circulation going to one's feet were offered, followed by a flurry of brisk walking and jumping jacks, amidst protests of "too much information" when

HOUSING 9

OUTSIDE 12

Labor Donated

Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

As we approach the shortest day of the year and the trees around us have dropped most of their leaves, and the wisteria that centers me as I come and go each day is back to being thick brambly branches rather than the lush green and purple of spring, summer and most of fall, I'm aware of my good fortune. We have a safe place to live and work. How lucky we are!

So many folks in Jackson County (and beyond) are struggling to find housing. We hope to open up some dialog about this issue and to quickly focus on solutions. We hope to hear from you. What are your recent experiences like as a renter? Are you finding that housing prices are skyrocketing? Are you like some people who've told us about how they've paid application fees to local property management companies and then wondered if those companies are still continuing to collect those non-refundable fees knowing that their places are quickly rented and people are wondering if they are even being considered? Has your rent recently increased in such a manner that you're being edged out of the neighborhood? In 2016, housing is a topic that we will be hitting hard and we want your stories, You can email them to editor@rvcommunitypress.

com or call us at 541-622-9483.

We have been working with KSKQ Community Radio to cover the issues of homelessness and affordable housing along with our Oregon Community Media coalition. Several of the interviews we recorded are available on the Rogue Valley Community Press website, including statements from Ashland mayor John Stromberg, City Councillor Pam Marsh, are homeless activists and more. You can listen to these exclusive interviews at www.kskq.org

We are also humbled to be part of a grassroots community group that is organizing the free meals for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The next meal will be December 23rd at Pioneer Hall in Ashland starting at 4 pm. Please let us know if you want to volunteer or donate food, clothing and thoughtful gifts.

In 2015, RVCP took some steps to become a non profit and in 2016 we'll work towards finalizing that. In October we celebrated our 4th year anniversary. We haven't run out of things to say yet, so I guess we'll keep at it.

We hope that the new year brings you peace and goodwill

We hope you have enough.

Kindly,
Vanessa and Jason Houk



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Your Social Justice News Resource

Issue 22

The Rogue Valley Community Press (RVCP) is a publication for the working class and a platform for marginalized voices in our community. Through RVCP, we aim to educate people about social justice issues and inspire them to create positive change. Published monthly, RVCP is available through subscription and local distribution locations.

Contributions from the community are welcome, including articles, letters to the editor, short poetry, and photography. Send submissions to editor@rvcommunitypress.com. All writing accepted for publication will be edited with due respect for the author's intent. Opinions expressed in RVCP are those of the authors, and not necessarily the editors

Subscriptions are \$40 per year and mailed to the address of your choice. Sign up online or send us a check.

For businesses looking to reach a socially conscious audience, RVCP is perfect for advertising. To learn more, give us a call.

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Belts tighten as ATI lockout of union workers enters fourth month

VIA NW LABOR PRESS

The lockout at specialty metals maker Allegheny Technologies Inc. (ATI) is now in its fourth month, with no end in sight. About 2,200 members of United Steelworkers (USW) are out of work in the labor dispute, which affects 12 facilities in six states, including about 180 members of USW Local 7150 at ATI's titanium plant in Albany, Oregon. ATI locked out its union employees Aug. 15 after USW didn't hold a member vote on the company's contract proposal by the company's deadline. ATI's proposal would cut health benefits significantly; make it easier to outsource union members' work; give one-time \$1,500 payments instead of regular hourly wage increases; and for new hires, end retiree health and life insurance benefits and replace the pension with a 401(k). ATI is operating its plants at a reduced level using replacement workers provided by Strom Engineering, a company that specializes in staffing [ed. SCABS] during strikes and lockouts. Ron Rodgers, USW staff representative for Local 7150, said every weekday six shuttle vans cross the Albany union picket line, transporting about 60 replacement workers, who are housed

by the company in a Salem hotel and paid wages above what union members were making.

Meanwhile, the company's regular employees struggle to get by on \$538 a week in unemployment benefits. That's Oregon's maximum benefit, but it's nearly \$400 a week less than they were taking home when they were on the job. A union strike and defense fund is providing the equivalent of \$200 per member per week to help members who are in financial hardship, distributed on the basis of need. Company health benefits expired at the end of November, but workers can enroll in a less-generous union health plan.

"The company's intent is to hold us out until our unemployment benefits expire," Rodgers said.

The unemployment benefits are currently scheduled to last six months, and would end in mid-February. But locked-out workers may get help from the Oregon Legislature. When it holds its one-month short session in February, State Rep. Dan Rayfield (D-Corvallis) will push a bill to extend unemployment benefits an additional six months for workers who are locked-out in a labor dispute. His proposal got a hearing Nov. 16 before the Oregon



Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice joins the picket line in Albany, OR.

House Business and Labor Committee. Rodgers points out that the locked-out workers are out of work through no fault of their own, but they face obstacles to re-employment that other unemployment insurance recipients don't. Prospective employers might be reluctant to hire them because they would return to ATI when the labor dispute ends.

Member spirits remain high, though, Rodgers said, in part because of the backing of many unions and members of the community — who've contributed or visited the picket line with donations of food.

"The support has just been amazing, and it really has helped to motivate and keep our guys' morale up."

And Local 7150 continues to help others of the community who are in even tougher straits. On Oct. 14, a dozen locked-out workers painted the house of a local family who needed to sell because of their daughter's illness. On Nov. 21, USW 7150 sponsored a benefit that raised over \$12,000 to help a local mom whose six-year-old daughter is battling leukemia.

No meetings are scheduled with the company.

"We're prepared for the long haul," Rodgers said.



CONTINUED FROM 1
The driver kept looking at me as the
cop spoke to him. I looked directly
at the driver. He got out of the car.

"I'm Detective Cardoza. I appreciate your cooperation."

I said nothing.

"I'm sure these officers told you what is going on?"

"They did."

"Where are you coming from?"

"From my home in Dedham."

"How did you get here?"

"I drove."

"Where is your car?"

"It's in the lot behind Bukhara." I pointed up Centre Street.

"Okay," the detective said. "We're going to let you go. Do you have a car key you can show me?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm going to reach into my pocket and pull out my car key."

"Okay."

Poll: 1 in 5 debtors say they'll be in debt forever

BY TONY MECIA

As holiday shopping swings into high gear, more Americans than ever say they doubt they will ever shed their debts, according to the latest annual debt survey by CreditCards.com.

According to the poll, 21 percent of those with debt predict they will never be rid of it. That's up from 18 percent in 2014 and 9 percent in 2013 who said their debt heading into the holiday season seemed insurmountable.

And yet, at the same time the poll found more people consigning themselves to endless debt, it also found a surge in people living debt-free. This year, 22 percent of those surveyed said they have no debt, compared with 14 percent a year earlier.

The polling data seem to show personal debt heading two different directions. While that might seem like a contradiction, economists say the figures reveal two distinct trends in personal finance.

Since the recession in 2008-09, for instance, many people have reduced their

debts and adopted healthier financial habits after years of becoming overextended on credit. In the second quarter of 2015, for instance, the percentage of U.S. consumers who pay off their credit card balances every month reached a post-recession high of nearly 30 percent, according to the American Bankers Association.

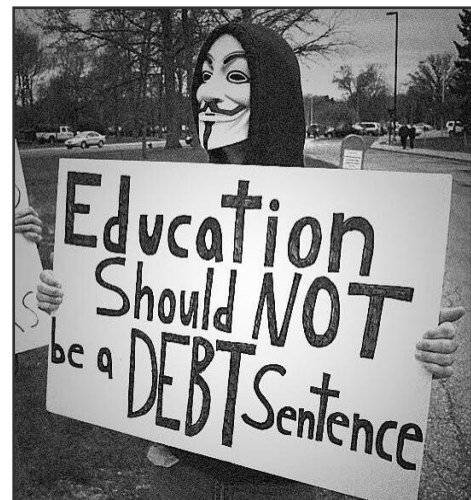
Yet at the same time, others struggle with job losses and high health care bills that can make their financial futures seem bleak -- especially if they are already carrying a lot of debt. For example, student loan delinquencies are on the rise, according to the Federal Reserve.

"You're talking about two distinct groups there, so it's not surprising," says James Chessen, chief economist with the ABA. "Generally, I'm bullish on consumers and how they have been handling their debt. However, there are some delinquencies, and there are some people who for various reasons have difficulty paying their obligations."

Overall household debt is still 5 percent below its 2008 peak, the Federal Reserve said last month.

we were Facebook friends. I told her this. “I’ll check in with you on Facebook,” she said.

I put my head down and walked to my car. My colleague was in our shared office and she was able to calm me down. I had about 45 minutes until my class began and I had to teach. I forgot the lesson I had planned. I forgot the schedule. I couldn’t think about how to do my job. I thought about the fact my word counted for nothing, they didn’t believe that I wasn’t a criminal. They had to find out. My word was not enough for them. My ID was not enough for them. My handmade one-of-a-kind knit hat was an object of suspicion. My Ralph Lauren quilted blazer was only a “puffy coat.” That white woman could just walk up to a cop and talk about me like I was an object for regard. I wanted to go back and spit in their faces. The cops were probably deeply satisfied with how they handled the interaction, how they didn’t escalate the situation, how they were respectful and polite.



The etiquette of poverty

BY VANESSA HOUK

The food bank opens at 9:30. If you arrive close to that time, it's likely that you'll be 14th or 15th in line, which means that you won't finish until noon. If you arrive at least a half hour early, you'll probably be 5th or 6th and you'll be finished by about 10:45. You're an early arriver at nearly everything anyway. Being on time feels like being late.

It's 9:00 when you arrive, park your twenty five year old car and get in line. You stand behind an older man whose weathered face tells a thing or two about a rugged life. He sits on top of a hard plastic box which does not look comfortable. A younger man stands next to him talking about his cell phone bill. Directly in front of them are five women. One has dark hair and stands to the side, alone. Four of them speak in animated, singsong Spanish and their gossip and laughter fill the parking lot. Several shopping bags are lined up in front of the door. There's less than a half hour to wait. It's cold.

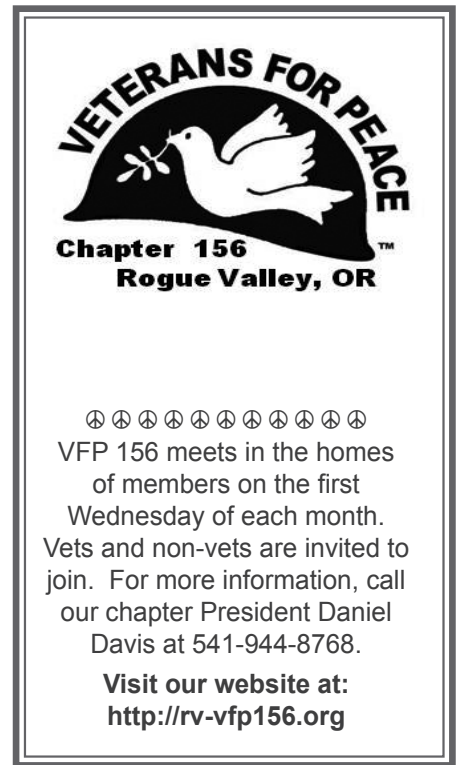
There's someone in the bushes near the edge of the building. At first you think it must be a homeless person, but it turns out to be a plumber. Looks like he's fixing something for the church.

A young man arrives and takes his place in line behind you. He's wearing a thick winter coat and gloves and heaves a heavy backpack from his shoulders onto the ground next to him. You wonder if he slept outside last night and think about how cold it is.

One of the women standing in front of the door moves and you see there's a note posted. It says the food bank's hours have changed, effective a week ago today and they won't open until 10. It's 9:15. There's not enough gas in the car to drive home and back and if you did that you'd lose your place in line and have to wait longer throughout the morning. Better to stay put and wait it out since you've already invested some time in this task.

A woman with a big, brown, fluffy dog approaches the line. The dog is on a leash, but he gravitates towards the man behind you and the man reaches his hand out to offer a pat. The dog moves back nervously, but the lady says something and the dog

ETIQUETTE 11



Rogue Valley speaks out on climate change

Opinionists are fond of holding and stating their view on subjects like Climate Change whether based on science or not. Some are gullible enough to be manipulated by the fossil fuel industry into holding opinions based on self-serving lies promoted by those corporations.

Climate deniers are cherry pickers of data that promote what they want to believe and reject evidence accepted by 97% or more of climate scientists that deny those opinions.

The wise skeptic will accept arguments when they are based on the high standards of scientific evidence.

Global warming occurs as follows: Earth transforms incoming visible sunlight radiation into longer infrared and heat radiation. This energy radiates outwards but is retained due to the 'blanket' of greenhouse gases (GHG) surrounding our planet. This 'blanket' is becoming thicker and thicker, and the planet heats up. This warming is neither healthy for life on the planet nor fair to the next generation

How do we reduce the thickness of this blanket? The solution is to emit fewer greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide) by changing everyday habits. We should also support legislation in 2016 that caps greenhouse gas emissions so future generations can enjoy a habitable planet.

Louise Shawkat

The Paris climate conference is our opportunity to respond to the Gift of Climate Change, nature showing that all life on earth is interdependent. Attendance by many heads of state demonstrates our seriousness.

Many conservatives are swayed by ideological demagoguery, failing to recognize that anthropogenic climate change exemplifies core conservative principles: 1) there is no such thing as a free lunch: major costs to fossil fuel use; 2) law of unintended consequences: powering our economy with fossil fuels, we didn't intend to disrupt climate; 3) destructiveness of concentrated power without checks and balances: profit motive of fossil fuel companies must be balanced by concern for the common welfare.

Many conservatives, including Republican legislators, evangelical Christians, many businesses, now see opportunities in proactively mitigating climate disruption. We will create far more renewable energy jobs than fossil fuel ones we lose, safeguard national defense, and prevent disruptive streams of climate refugees as from Syria.

We must use market mechanisms like fossil fuel taxes which have been shown to be effective; we must do this now while they can work adequately.

Please contact state legislators, Gov. Brown, Rep Walden, Senators Wyden, and Merkely to support climate mitigation, and oppose boondoggles like Jordan Cove.

Robert John Scheelen

The question to ask is whether we wish to continue, individually and collectively, to be part of the problem, or whether we'd prefer to become part of the solution. Several states already have effective programs that cap greenhouse gas emissions. Contrary to the claims of naysayers, these have not caused economic collapse. Instead, states capping emissions have all displayed positive economic growth, and have simultaneously reduced their greenhouse gas emissions. The message is clear: we can address global warming without tanking our economy.

Programs across the nation can serve as models for Oregon. These states have reduced hazardous air pollution, increased independence on out-of-state fuel sources, and stimulated local renewable energy economies. They have stimulated living wage jobs in renewable energy, compensated economically disadvantaged residents, and strengthened their economies.

It is time for Oregon to become part of the solution and cap greenhouse gas emissions. Let's do it in 2016!

Kathy Conway

The Rogue Valley Community Press welcomes your articles, letters, PSA's, poems, artwork and events. Send your stories to editor@rvcommunitypress.com, or call the RVCP hotline at 541-622-9483.



In solidarity with the Paris Summit, around 200 people gathered in Ashland on a cold but sunny day to show the world that Southern Oregon thinks we should take action against climate change. This action was sponsored by Southern Oregon Pachamama Alliance Community, local Citizens Climate Lobby group, Rogue Climate, and SOCAN. Photo by Helga Motley.

I fit the description....

BY STEVE LOCKE

This is what I wore to work today. On my way to get a burrito before work, I was detained by the police.

I noticed the police car in the public lot behind Centre Street. As I was walking away from my car, the cruiser followed me. I walked down Centre Street and was about to cross over to the burrito place and the officer got out of the car.

"Hey my man," he said. He unsnapped the holster of his gun. I took my hands out of my pockets. "Yes?" I said. "Where you coming from?" "Home." "Where's home?" "Dedham." "How'd you get here?" "I drove."

He was next to me now. Two other police cars pulled up. I was standing in from of the bank across the street from the burrito place. I was going to get lunch before I taught my 1:30 class. There were cops all around me.

I said nothing. I looked at the officer who addressed me. He was white, stocky, bearded.

"You weren't over there, were you?" He pointed down Centre Street toward Hyde Square.

"No. I came from Dedham." "What's your address?" I told him.

"We had someone matching your description just try to break into a woman's house."

A second police officer stood next to me; white, tall, bearded. Two police cruisers passed and would continue to circle the block for the 35 minutes I was standing across the street from the burrito place.

"You fit the description," the officer said. "Black male, knit hat, puffy coat. Do you have identification?"

It's in my wallet. May I reach into my pocket and get my wallet?" "Yeah."

I handed him my license. I told him it did not have my current address. He walked over to a police car. The other cop, taller, wearing sunglasses, told me

that I fit the description of someone who broke into a woman's house. Right down to the knit cap.

Barbara Sullivan made a knit cap for me. She knitted it in pinks and browns and blues and oranges and lime green. No one has a hat like this. It doesn't fit any description that anyone would have. I looked at the second cop. I clasped my hands in front of me to stop them from shaking.

"For the record," I said to the second cop, "I'm not a criminal. I'm a college professor." I was wearing my faculty ID around my neck, clearly visible with my photo.

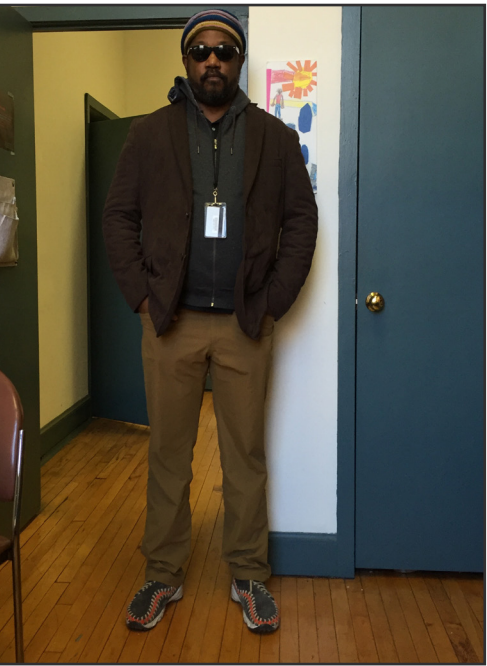
"You fit the description so we just have to check it out." The first cop returned and handed me my license.

"We have the victim and we need her to take a look at you to see if you are the person."

It was at this moment that I knew that I was probably going to die. I am not being dramatic when I say this. I was not going to get into a police car. I was not going to present myself to some victim. I was not going let someone tell the cops that I was not guilty when I already told them that I had nothing to do with any robbery. I was not going to let them take me anywhere because if they did, the chance I was going to be accused of something I did not do rose exponentially. I knew this in my heart. I was not going anywhere with these cops and I was not going to let some white woman decide whether or not I was a criminal, especially after I told them that I was not a criminal. This meant that I was going to resist arrest. This meant that I was not going to let the police put their hands on me.

If you are wondering why people don't go with the police, I hope this explains it for you.

Something weird happens when you are on the street being detained by the police. People look at you like you are a criminal. The police are detaining you so clearly you must have done something, otherwise they wouldn't have you. No one made eye contact with me. I was hoping that someone I knew would walk down the street or come out of one of the shops or get



off the 39 bus or come out of JP Licks and say to these cops, "That's Steve Locke. What the FUCK are you detaining him for?"

The cops decided that they would bring the victim to come view me on the street. The asked me to wait. I said nothing. I stood still.

"Thanks for cooperating," the second cop said. "This is probably nothing, but it's our job and you do fit the description. 5' 11", black male. One-hundred-and-sixty pounds, but you're a little more than that. Knit hat."

A little more than 160. Thanks for that, I thought.

An older white woman walked behind me and up to the second cop. She turned and looked at me and then back at him. "You guys sure are busy today."

I noticed a black woman further down the block. She was small and concerned. She was watching what was going on. I focused on her red coat. I slowed my breathing. I looked at her from time to time.

I thought: Don't leave, sister. Please don't leave.

The first cop said, "Where do you teach?" "Massachusetts College of Art and Design." I tugged at the lanyard that had my ID. "How long you been teaching there?" "Thirteen years."

We stood in silence for about 10 more minutes.

An unmarked police car pulled up. The first cop went over to talk to the driver.

someone said that in order to stay warm, it's better to take off all your clothes before diving into your sleeping bag! Time passed slowly. I had to leave the group briefly to put on another layer of warm socks, but then found that I couldn't get my shoes back on with two pairs of thick socks, so I warmed up in my sleeping bag before returning outside. I thought often of my homeless friends, and how much planning has to go into survival while living outside, without drawing attention to the fact that you're there: hide your tarp or tent, no fires, shoes that are big enough to fit 2 pairs of socks, staying warm, dry, AND being able to carry it all around on your back during the day or risk having your stuff stolen. There was rumor that Senator Merkley was going to pay a visit to our camp, so we tried to stay up to make sure he knew how desperately the growing number of homeless in our community need help, but we retreated to our tents when the rains started at 10:00 p.m. and he still hadn't arrived. I slept fitfully, increasingly wet and cold. I reflected on a conversation I had had earlier with an affable young homeless man who had referred to the fact that people sometimes responded to him with suspicion, as if they thought he was going to kill them. With all the mass shootings recently by seemingly nice, quiet, housed men, I pondered how do we draw the line between who is stable and who, mentally ill? I was reassured that at our

encampment we had a couple of big, tough guys providing security for the night. Many of the women who stay in our shelters express gratitude for a peaceful night's sleep, fiercely warning the men at the shelters to, "Keep away from me." It took on new meaning for me now that I was experiencing a similar vulnerability that comes from being alone and outside in an unpredictable world. The huge difference was that I had safeguards in place that most homeless women don't have, and yet interestingly, I still felt vulnerable. Most of the campers were up at first light. We were a much grumpier, bundled-up group than when we first arrived the sunny, fall afternoon before. The experience of taking down my soggy, wet tent in the pouring rain made me so thankful for my warm, dry home, and also mindful of the fact that too many people of all ages in our community, have no home or permanent shelter to return to. I have a new understanding of why the homeless often say little, keep their sweatshirt hoods covering their heads, and realize how easy it is to view the world with paranoia; all this after just one night spent in quasi-homelessness. This memorable experience has given me new insights and given rise to more than a few questions. In a civilized society, shelter should be a basic necessity for every man, woman, and child. A more urgent question is: Why isn't it a priority in ours?

Healthcare
CONTINUED FROM 11
the government took arguably the most significant step in that direction through passing the healthcare law. Still, Americans remain divided on the matter, and continue to favor a system based mostly on private health insurance to a totally government-run system. Americans' views on the government's responsibility for ensuring healthcare coverage have changed during the Obama administration, with Americans less in favor of the government having that role than before. These data are important to monitor as Obama leaves office, especially because the fate of the healthcare law may depend on the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. Its existence is all but assured if a Democrat wins, but is far less certain if a Republican is elected.

**Free
Community
Meal**

**December 23rd
Pioneer Hall, Ashland
4 pm - 6 pm**

**Volunteers Needed
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Much of the world perplexed that climate debate continues in U.S.

BY ARI SHAPIRO
At the U.N. climate summit in Paris, the U.S. has a big footprint. Cabinet officials scurry from meeting to meeting, trying to get a binding deal that would help some 200 countries slow the planet's warming. Yet in some ways, the United States is an outlier. "Everybody else is taking climate change really seriously," President Obama said during his visit to Paris at the start of the summit. "They think it's a really big problem."

As the president acknowledged, he leads one of the few advanced democracies in the world where climate change is still the subject of political debate.

"You travel around Europe, and you talk to leaders of governments and the opposition, and they're arguing about a whole bunch of things. One thing they're not arguing about is whether the science of climate change is real and whether we have to do something about it," he said.

As the summit began, House Republicans in Washington were debating a bill to gut the Obama administration's clean energy plan. "These EPA rules affect jobs, and they affect the amount of money in the pockets of moms and dads all across this great country," said South Carolina Republican Jeff Duncan.

This is not just small-ball domestic politics that the rest of the world ignores. The debate in Washington shapes the perception of the United States in Paris. Some countries at the summit accuse the U.S. — which, in the 20th century, has emitted more carbon than any other — of trying to have it both ways: emitting more carbon per capita than almost any other country, while wagging fingers at the rest of the world.

Chandra Bhushan is with the Indian delegation in Paris. He gave a long presentation comparing the U.S. to India. "If all the U.S. power plants were considered a country, it would have been the third largest polluter of greenhouse gases in the world," he noted.



President Obama addresses the opening ceremony of the World Climate Change Conference 2015 (COP21) on Nov. 30. Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

Changing Perceptions Of U.S.
Outside of the main complex where negotiations are taking place, an area called "Climate Generations" provides a gathering place for environmental groups, civil society organizations, activists and others from around the world.

There are indigenous tribes and bicycle-powered computer chargers, groups singing hymns and people waving placards. French interpreter Claudine Pierson says she was "surprised to see how many Americans are around."

And how are they perceived? "Like polluters, I guess," she says. Everyone is aware that Congress is fighting Obama on carbon emissions, Pierson says, "because it was all over the newspapers."

Many people share her view of the U.S. Mamadou Mboudji is an environmental advocate from Senegal.

"I perceived the Americans as a country that does not respect the others' opinions," Mboudji says.

Hanging over all of this is the fact that the U.S. has walked away from global climate deals before — most notably, the landmark 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Still, many people at the summit note a big change since Obama took office. They say the U.S. is no longer seen as a spoiler in these talks.

"The relationship has never been this close, open and transparent," says Tony de Brum, the foreign minister for the Marshall

Islands. "In all my years working with the U.S. government, I've never felt them more a real part of the effort to resolve the problem."

U.S. Faces A Political 'Complexity'
The question now is whether the hot political debate in Washington is tying the hands of American negotiators in Paris. U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz says it isn't. "The programs that have been put forward will be executed," he said in an interview this week in Paris. "They are based on existing authorities, whether it is efficiency standards for vehicles or the clean power plan for power plants."

Yet as Republicans threaten to shut down the federal government if the U.S. delegation in Paris commits to paying too much money to developing countries to deal with the impacts of climate change, Moniz acknowledges that "certainly, certain issues require congressional action."

"I think the phrases that you hear here are that everybody understands that the American delegation is negotiating in good faith," says Rachel Kyte, the World Bank's special envoy for climate change.

People understand that U.S. climate politics can be complicated, she says. "And that is a complexity that everybody understands the U.S. will have to work its way through," says Kyte.

People outside the United States are a bit "perplexed" by this, Kyte adds. But, it's not the first time the rest of the world has found the U.S. perplexing.



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First they jailed the bankers, now every Icelander to get paid in bank sale

BY CLAIRE BERNISH

First, Iceland jailed its crooked bankers for their direct involvement in the financial crisis of 2008. Now, every Icelander will receive a payout for the sale of one of its three largest banks, Íslandsbanki.

If Finance Minister Bjarni Benediktsson has his way — and he likely will — Icelanders will be paid kr 30,000 after the government takes over ownership of the bank. Íslandsbanki would be second of the three largest banks under State proprietorship.

“I am saying that the government take [sic] some decided portion, 5%, and simply hand it over to the people of this country,” he stated.

Because Icelanders took control of their government, they effectively own the banks. Benediktsson believes this will bring foreign capital into the country and ultimately fuel the economy — which, incidentally, remains the only European nation to recover fully from the 2008 crisis. Iceland even managed to pay its outstanding debt to the IMF in full — in advance of the due date.

Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Budget

TED TALKS – Privacy: does it still exist and does it matter?

The TED Talks theme for December asks the question, “Privacy: Does it Still Exist and Does it Matter?” Join the lively discussion during this session, postponed from October, on Tuesday, December 22, from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m., in the Adams Room of the Medford Branch Library, 205 South Central Avenue.

Enjoy video lectures by Alessandro Acquisti: What Will a Future without Secrets Look Like?; Glenn Greenwald: Why Privacy Matters; and Lorrie Faith Cranor: What’s Wrong with Your Pa\$\$w0rd?

As one of the first journalists privy to

Committee vice chairperson, explained the move would facilitate the lifting of capital controls, though he wasn’t convinced State ownership would be the ideal solution. Former Finance Minister Steingrímur J. Sigfússon sided with Þórðarson, telling a radio show, “we shouldn’t lose the banks to the hands of fools” and that Iceland would benefit from a shift in focus to separate “commercial banking from investment banking.”

Plans haven’t yet been firmly set for when the takeover and subsequent payments to every person in the country will occur, but Iceland’s revolutionary approach to dealing with the international financial meltdown of 2008 certainly deserves every bit of the attention it’s garnered.

Iceland recently jailed its 26th banker — with 74 years of prison time amongst them — for causing the financial chaos. Meanwhile, U.S. banking criminals were rewarded for their fraud and market manipulation with an enormous bailout at the taxpayer’s expense.

NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden’s archives, Glenn Greenwald has a unique window into the inner workings of the NSA (National Security Agency).

Lorrie Faith Cranor studies online privacy, usable security, phishing, spam, and other research around keeping us safe online.

TED (an acronym for Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a nonprofit organization whose slogan is “Ideas Worth Spreading.” For more information on this monthly discussion group, please contact the Medford Branch Library at 541-774-8679 or visit jcls.org.

Medford historic walking tour

*Medford Historic Walking Tour
December 19th*

The third Saturday of every month, Historian Ben Truwe brings Medford’s history to life as he conducts a walking tour of downtown Medford. December 19 he may speak about the frontier days, when Front Street hosted “...wooden stores and tent saloons and brothels.” Or, he might tell you how Colvig, who became famous as Bozo the Clown, “...met a crossing guard [at Front and Main Streets]... who provided the inspiration for Walt Disney’s Goofy.” Every time you join Ben on his walking tour of Medford, you can be sure you’ll learn something new! His tours take a couple of hours, beginning in front of the Southern Oregon Historical Society Research Library, at Sixth and Central Streets in Medford. Saturday, December 19. Cost? FREE! 11am-1pm; meet in front of the SOHS Library, 106 N. Central Avenue, Medford, OR. For reservations, please call Ben @ 541-773-8369.

Celebrate New Years Eve with crafts for kids

Celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of another on Wednesday, December 30, from 12 noon – 2 p.m., in the Children’s Department of the Medford Branch Library, 205 South Central Avenue. Take part in fun craft projects, make a fantastic party hat to wear when the clock strikes twelve, play fun and exciting games, and enjoy delicious treats as we get excited for 2016!

This event is proudly sponsored by Friends of the Medford Library who will provide light refreshments. For more information, please call the Medford Children’s Department at 541-774-8678 or visit jcls.org.

Etiquette

CONTINUED FROM 3

The old man has finished his cigarette and sits back down on the crate. The younger man continues to fiddle with his phone. The woman in front of them is reading a book. The four women continue to talk, gossip and laugh. Every few minutes one of them moves and peers into the window at the clock that hangs inside.

You stare at the azalea bushes in front of the church and leaves that are covered with ice. Still 10 minutes to go.

The dog woman returns, only without a dog this time. She walks to the front of the line and picks up a shopping bag as to announce that she is in her rightful place at the head of the line.

The little boy laughs.

The woman in front of the old man closes her book. “Wish they would open up already,” she tells the old man. “Yup,” he replies.

More people arrive and the line is filling out. You watch the clock.

The door opens and a middle aged man stands there holding out a pile of numbered cards. “Whose number one?”

The line files in until it’s just the old man and what turns out to be his son. And then, “Number six.”

You take the card and thank him, but he’s already moved on to the man behind you. You step through the door.

What’s on your mind?

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Send your stories to editor@rvcommunitypress.com, or call the RVCP hotline at 541-622-9483.

Government should ensure healthcare coverage, says 51%

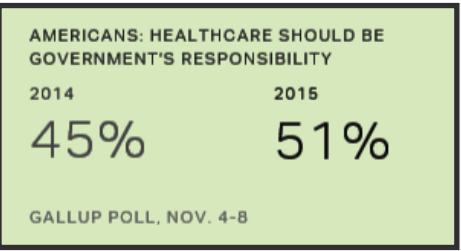
VIA GALLUP.COM

U.S. adults are slightly more likely to say it is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure all Americans have health insurance coverage (51%) than to say it is not the government’s responsibility (47%). The percentage who believe the government has that obligation is up six percentage points from 2014. This year marks the first time since 2008 that a majority of Americans say the government is responsible for making sure all citizens have health insurance.

From 2000 to 2008, between 54% and 69% of Americans said ensuring healthcare coverage for all citizens was the responsibility of the federal government. But the issue grew more divisive in 2009, as President Barack Obama worked to enact the Affordable Care Act, which Congress passed in 2010. Between 2009 and 2011, Americans were split nearly evenly on the matter. Then from 2012 to 2014, public opinion shifted, with slight majorities saying healthcare coverage was not the government’s responsibility.

The latest poll was conducted Nov. 4-8 as part of Gallup’s annual Health and Healthcare survey.

The percentage who feel the government should have this responsibility has increased across most key demographic groups since 2014, including lower-income Americans (+13 points), 50- to 64-year-olds (+12 points), Democrats and independents who lean Democratic (+9 points) and whites (+8 points). Across three of the country’s four regions, this view has increased by seven points or more; the South is the only region where there has been no such change. Americans who approve of the Affordable Care Act are more than three times as likely as those who disapprove of the law to say healthcare coverage should be the government’s responsibility, 80% vs. 26%, respectively.



Less than half of whites, Americans aged 50 and older, Republicans and independents who lean Republican, Southerners and higher-income Americans say healthcare coverage is the federal government’s responsibility. Americans Still Favor Private Insurance System

Although U.S. adults lean toward the view that the government should ensure all Americans have healthcare coverage, they do not endorse a government-run system, which exists in most other Western nations. When given a choice, 55% say they prefer a system mostly based on private insurance, as the U.S. has now, while 41% would prefer a government-run system. The percentage favoring a private system is down from 61% last year.

Despite receiving Medicare, which is mostly paid for by the government, senior citizens are the least likely to favor a government-run system (31%). The only age group in which a majority favor a government-run healthcare system are those younger than 30 (53%). Support for a government-run system drops with each subsequent age group.

Bottom Line Though Americans’ views on the government’s role in healthcare coverage have fluctuated in recent years, they remain just as contentious now as they were prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act. The latest result is the most favorable toward the view that the government should be responsible for healthcare coverage since

HEALTHCARE 12

Oregon DHS refuses food Donation by pro-marijuana group

BY MICHAEL ALLEN

The Department of Human Services (DHS) office in Eugene, Oregon, originally accepted a food donation by the Women Leaders in Cannabis (WLC) for needy families on Thanksgiving, but changed its mind and refused the food for the poor because of the cannabis connection (video below). “We discussed in detail [with the DHS office in Eugene] how we would make it happen,” Lindsey Jacobsen, the executive director of WLC, told KATU. “And a few days later we got a phone call back stating that they wouldn’t be able to work with us due to too much time being spent on it.” “It’s disheartening,” Jacobsen added. “We have lives just like everybody else, families, jobs. We’re just happy to be able to give back now that we have the opportunity to.” Gene Evans, a DHS spokesman, told the TV station that it was the decision of the office, not the state or the agency itself, but it’s not clear why the state allowed the local office

to refuse food for the hungry. Evans stated in an email: “Their decision not to accept the donations was based on discomfort with the connection of a marijuana organization to DHS human services ... The Eugene office felt that baskets sponsored by this organization could create the impression that we endorsed cannabis.” While the DHS office contemplates its tender feelings about where food for hungry should come from, Eugene has a serious homeless problem. The Register-Guard reported in September about the many homeless and mentally ill who live in downtown Eugene, which has been causing division among residents. As far as the Thanksgiving food, KindTree Autism Rocks, a charity, accepted WLC’s donation baskets, reports KMTR. KindTree Autism Rocks had no problem with WLC being connected to cannabis, and was eager to get the food to needy members of the community.



Winter solstice community potluck

Join friends and family at the Bellview Grange to Celebrate the longest night of the year and the return of the Light! Sunday, December 20th at the Bellview Grange, 1050 Tolman Creek Road, in Ashland, Oregon. Setup will begin at 4 pm and doors will open at 4:30 pm. Dinner is at 6 pm. Please bring a potluck dish to share with ingredients labeled and serving utensils. There is a warming oven and burners to keep food warm before dinner. An RSVP would be appreciated but not necessary! Respond to bvgr rentals@gmail.com

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Occupy Medford meets every Saturday in the Medford Library from 10am - Noon

99% S'TRONG!

Petition to create 7 million affordable homes

We have a housing crisis in the United States. Rising homelessness has led some communities to declare a state of emergency. We can see it wherever we live, in big cities and small towns. Hundreds of thousands of people are sleeping in cars, tents and in doorways. Millions more are just a crisis away from homelessness. A layoff or a serious sickness could put the roof over their heads at risk.

Our grandparents, moms and dads, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers deserve safe, stable, affordable homes.

This is not a natural emergency. It is human made. We can solve this crisis if we choose to.

Across the country, there is a shortage of 7 million affordable homes.

The solution is simple: People need homes.

We can build 7 million homes with the support of all levels of government. State and local governments must be part of the solution by investing in affordable homes and removing barriers and creating incentives for building affordable homes. But local communities can't solve this alone. It is time the federal government reinvested in affordable homes.

Join us in calling on the federal, state, and local governments to take emergency action and to create 7 million new affordable homes NOW to bring America back home.

Sign the petition at:
<https://www.change.org/p/homelessness-emergency>

Portland OKs 90-day notice for rent increases, no-cause evictions

BY ANDREW THEEN
FOR THE OREGONIAN

Portland approved new rules in October that require landlords to give more notice to renters when raising rents or evicting them without cause.

The City Council unanimously approved the rules, which Commissioner Dan Saltzman said don't go far enough but "provide a safety valve" for tenants facing unprecedented rent increases and low vacancy rates citywide.

During the third quarter of 2015, Portland saw 15.4 percent rent hikes and 3.2 percent vacancy levels, according to city records.

"I wish we could push these protections even further," said Commissioner Nick Fish, citing state laws that bar cities from enacting tighter rules. "Much of that is out of our control."

Starting next month, landlords will be required to give 90 days' written notice to tenants when raising rents by 5 percent or more, or when evicting residents without cause. Currently, most landlords are required to give just 30 days' notice, the state minimum, when terminating a lease or raising rent.

If landlords don't follow the rules, tenants could be owed "an amount up to three months rent as well as actual damages, reasonable attorney fees and costs," according to city documents.

Mayor Charlie Hales said Portland has to try new things. Some 200,000 new residents are expected during the next 20 years, he said. "Are we going to be San Francisco at that point or Portland? That's what these issues come down to," Hales said.

Saltzman said not all landlords are bad actors, but he thinks no-cause evictions are being "abused." He promised to return next year with a review and evaluation of the new policy

Two affordable housing projects for veterans coming to Southern Oregon

BY SAM MARSH

On this Veterans Day, Housing and Community Services has announced two new affordable housing projects to help veterans in Medford and Klamath Falls.

The two projects, Victory Place in Medford, and Victory Commons in Klamath Falls, will create 26 new affordable homes for veterans who have experienced housing instability, homelessness and have low incomes

The State Housing Council approved the projects on November 6th. The Medford location will include 16 units for veterans and the Klamath Falls will include 10 units.

The resources used to fund these new affordable homes for veterans are the result of an increase to the document recording fee dedicated to fund affordable housing for veterans passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2013 (HB 2417).

Housing

CONTINUED FROM 1

her unit and never had any complaints about her.

When St. Vincent de Paul stepped in to help, the threat of eviction weighed heavily on her mind. "They told me, when they saw how worried I was, don't worry. How long do you want to stay? I said, I don't want to go now, because I just couldn't get out of here and maintain myself. I have 25 years of work all filed downstairs... that I have to re-sort. I'd like to stay at least until spring." St. Vincent pledged to help her pay the difference between her old rent and the considerable increase in rent for a few months to help ease her worries. "They've been great," she says.

But where will she find housing?

Welcome to the fallout of the foreclosure crisis of 2010. Throughout Jackson County there are numerous homes that are sitting empty. The banks hold on to them as real estate prices continue to rise.

What can Jackson County do to alleviate this? First our county commissioners must be dedicated to finding housing solutions that work. There are groups in Jackson County who are ready to build tiny houses and affordable homes-- our city governments need to facilitate this before this housing crisis gets worse.

Giving housing to the homeless is three times cheaper than leaving them on the streets

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

The final week of January saw an annual ritual in government statistical gathering that few people know about — the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Point-in-Time survey of the homeless population, in which HUD recruits volunteers around the country to go out and try to count up all the homeless people living in America. This year, White House Chief of Staff Dennis McDonough even joined up, volunteering as part of the San Francisco PIT crew.

Counting the homeless is, of course, a critical element to making appropriate homelessness policy. But good policy also requires greater awareness of a discovery that research continuously confirms — it's cheaper to fix homelessness by giving homeless people homes to live in than to let the homeless live on the streets and try to deal with the subsequent problems. The most recent report along these lines was a May Central Florida Commission on Homelessness study indicating that the region spends \$31,000 a year per homeless person on "the salaries of law-enforcement officers to arrest and transport homeless individuals — largely for nonviolent offenses such as trespassing, public intoxication or sleeping in parks — as well as the cost of jail stays, emergency-room visits and hospitalization for medical and psychiatric issues."

By contrast, getting each homeless person a house and a caseworker to supervise their needs would cost about \$10,000 per person.

This particular study looked at the situations in Orange, Seminole, and Osceola Counties in Florida and of course conditions vary from place to place. But as Scott Keyes points out, there are similar studies showing large financial savings in Charlotte and Southeastern Colorado

from focusing on simply housing the homeless.

The general line of thinking behind these programs is one of the happier legacies of the George W Bush administration. His homelessness czar Philip Mangano was a major proponent of a "housing first" approach to homelessness. And by and large it's worked. Between 2005 and 2012, the rate of homelessness in America declined 17 percent. Figures released this month from the National Alliance to End Homeless showed another 3.7 percent decline. That's a remarkable amount of progress to make during a period when the overall economic situation has been generally dire.

But the statistical success of anti-homelessness efforts even in the face of a bad economy underscores the point of the Florida study.

When it comes to the chronically homeless, you don't need to fix everything to improve their lives. You don't even really need new public money. What you need to do is target those resources at the core of the problem — a lack of housing — and deliver the housing, rather than spending twice as much on sporadic legal and medical interventions. And the striking thing is that despite the success of housing first initiatives, there are still lots of jurisdictions that haven't yet switched to this approach. If Central Florida and other lagging regions get on board, we could take a big bite out of the remaining homelessness problem and free up lots of resources for other public services.

